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ABSTRACT

This study focused on teachers' perceptions of student needs, perceptions of school social and professional climate, and their educational beliefs. It was posited that there are links between teachers' philosophies, ways in which they conceptualize meeting student needs, ways in which they experience their work environment, and their success in developing both professionally and personally. Structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten teachers from elementary and secondary levels. These experienced teachers had been selected by their principals as exceptionally competent and growth-oriented in their profession. The teachers responded to inquiries on their attitudes and feelings about the social networks and work environment in their schools, and their beliefs about educational goals and ways to apply these goals in eliciting the most promising responses from students. Extensive quotations from various teachers are used to illustrate both variations and commonalities in the teachers' approach to their work, colleagues, and students. Suggestions are made for further research into the effect of school climate on teacher effectiveness. (JD)

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THE WORK-LIFE EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS AND ORIENTATION TOWARD PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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April, 1984

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans, LA, April 23-27, 1984.

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> I never went to college until my youngest child was three and so when I started (teaching) I was thirty-seven years old. This is an adult career for me and it really means a lot. This is what I'm going to spend the next several years doing and it's something I enjoy. It's my pleasure as well as my professional responsibility. (S., high school history teacher, 1984.)

What is distinctive about teachers who consider their work to be pleasure as well as professional responsibility? What perspectives on work, perceptions of students' needs, and educatonal philosophies are characteristic of teachers who enjoy teaching and consider their work important? What can be done to change working conditions in schools so that schools will foster professional development of teachers? In the present study it was found that teachers who focus on ways to meet student needs for access to sources of knowledge are also teachers who experience strong social and professional networks of support in their schools. These teachers have a vision of learning as a process in which the student either uncovers knowledge already known unconsciously or discovers knowledge from another source by surmounting obstacles in the way. When learning is conceptualized as a process of uncovering or discovering, teachers see their role as facilitators, providers of student access and removers of obstacles students confront on the paths to knowledge.

Teachers who did not see their roles as facilitators had a different vision of learning. They thought of the

teacher as a diagnostician of student deficits in knowledge. They talked about learning objectives and outcomes, focusing on the states of knowledge their students would attain. They did not focus primarily on learning as a process but rather on knowledge as a final state. In this study the teachers who envisioned the teacher's role as diagnostician experienced weaker social and professional networks of support in their schools.

If teachers oriented toward process-access have stronger networks of support than teachers oriented toward diagnosis-deficit approaches, of what significance is this finding? Do support networks contribute to teacher belief systems or do teacher belief systems determine the way they perceive their support networks? Further, what effect does the teacher's sets of beliefs have on student learning? Many studies based on organizational theory have attempted to show the influence school environments have on teachers and students.

Little (1981) found the norms of teacher collegiality and continuous improvement were fostered by frequent informal talk about teaching, frequent opportunities to design and evaluate teaching materials, and frequent formal opportunities to teach and learn from colleagues. Little's findings are supported by Joyce & McKibbin (1982) in an investigaion of social ecology of several schools. The authors concluded that the informal social system is a

powerful factor in determining the receptivity of teachers to learning and innovation. Warm informal interchange fostered growth-producing activities carried on by individuals, small groups, and whole faculties. Informal interactions were most successful when supported by strong formal systems encouraging collegiality. Rutter, et al, (1979) also discovered that in schools where the norm for teachers was improvement of teaching, students displayed higher academic performance and less delinquent behavior.

In the studies cited above investigators view schools as units of comparison. They agree that in congenial, supportive working atmospheres, teachers find it easier to improve teaching and students learn and behave better than in schools where the work climate is unfriendly, inefficient, unharmonious, or nonsupportive of teacher efforts to improve. It can be argued that school environments influence teacher beliefs or it can be argued that teachers experience the school environment in particular ways because they have certain beliefs. Moreover, teachers may have a part to play in creating the social and professional climate in schools. Teachers who believe learning is process-access may place high value on the contributions of learners, whereas teachers who believe their role is to diagnose deficits may place low value on the contributons of learners. Teachers' beliefs about students may be consistent with their beliefs about colleagues. That is, if they are diagnosticians, they may

be judgmental about colleagues and they may contribute to a school climate where teacher improvement is discouraged. If they focus on learning as process, they may be more tolerant of experimentation by their colleagues as well as their students, and they may contribute to a shool climate where teacher improvement is the norm.

Indeed, in a study by Busses & Chittenden (1976), teachers' construct systems regarding development of human resources were found to embrace their beliefs about children as well as their beliefs about adults. Teachers who had a deficit perspective of human nature generalized about adults as well as children. Such teachers are neither likely to appreciate value in ther colleagues' ideas nor in their students' own resources. Thus, such teachers are likely to experience both social and professional isolation and they are not likely to be enthusiastic about learning from their colleagues or experimenting with new teaching approaches, even when new approaches are possible improvements.

No easy recipe emerges for creating better schools, nor do studies reveal causes for successful creation of schools where conditions are most favorable for teachers and students. In this study I interviewed teachers in order to determine whether their beliefs about learning could be compared consistently with their perceptions about the support systems available for improving teaching in their schools.

Only those teachers viewed by their principals as exceptionally competent were interviewed. They worked in seven different schools that had different qualities of social and professional work climates for teachers. How do teachers who are perceived as competent in a variety of work climates in different schools view their work? How do they conceptualize student needs? What are their beliefs about fulfilling student needs? How do they evaluate their own effectiveness and teaching competence? Finally, what conclusions can we draw about school environments that foster beliefs and attitudes of teachers interested in professional improvement? How do teachers' beliefs influence teaching strategies and he professional norms in their schools? What further questions can be asked to assist us in fashioning ways to encourage teachers to concentrate on continuous updating and improvement of teaching?

OVERVIEw. In this study I focus on teachers' perceptions of student needs, perceptions of school social and professional climate, and teachers' educational beliefs. I suggest links between their philosophies, ways in which they conceptualize meeting student needs, ways in which they experience their work environments, and real conditions existing in the schools. I argue that teachers who enjoy teaching and who consider student ideas and experience valuable are more

likely to pursue professional growth and development than teachers who consider themselves to be diagnosticians of student deficits. That is to say, I show that some teacher perspectives, educational perceptions, and beliefs are more likely than others to be associated with professional growth and development. Finally, I show that striking differences occur in teachers' experiences of their schools' social climates and work environments. Because this is not an experimental study, conclusions will point to new frameworks for investigation and new questions. I interviewed teachers in an attempt to understand how they concepualized their work and the places where they work.

I define professional growth and development to mean continuous effort by a teacher to improve his or her own teaching through learning, experimenting, analysing, and self-evaluating. Teachers' work-related learning may occur in many areas: e.g. teaching style, class management, course content information, curriculum design, materials design, use of new technology.

For this study teachers from a small city of 50,000 people in northeastern United States were selected by recommendations of school principals. Principals were asked for names of teachers who were consistently interested in professional improvement. It was stressed that the principal's selection of such teachers was to be made primarily on the basis of the principal's beliefs about the

teacher's orientation toward professonal growth and development over a period of years, not necessarily on excellence of a teacher's performance. Thus, principals selected relatively experienced teachers who were perceived as growth-oriented. Structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten teachers from seven schools: five elementary shools, a public high school, and an alternative high school. Teachers were between the ages of thirty-five and fifty and had taught from seven to thirty years.

Teachers were asked questions in three major areas to determine the degree of their orientation to professional development, to define their perceptions about working environments at school, and to describe their educational philosophies. The interviewer asked open-ended questions, allowing teachers to develop topics of special concern. Interviews varied in length from one to three hours and in subject matter from one teacher's responses to combat duty in Viet Nam to another teacher's decision to leave a religious order. Some topics were raised by the interviewer and other topics were volunteered by teachers. All interviews were taped and transcribed. When they were analysed several new categories for analysis emerged.

SCHOOL CLIMATE.

Social networks in the work environment. All teachers were asked to respond to questions about social networks at

school. They reported a broad range of warmth across school climates from cozy to cool.

> There are a couple of teachers I share my lunch period with...Both of them are excellent English teachers and we have discussions at noontime that may start out with a point of grammar and get into literary allusions and then historical allusions -- it's just great fun and stimulatiion. Or J.D. will come in waving a copy of the Times and say, "Did you read Harriman in the Times yesterday on criticizing Reagan's policy?" and everybody'll sit down and be talking about that. Then M.A.'ll come in with a Times Book Review and say, "Are you sure you read this?" because you ought to be aware that this book is coming out. So there's a lot of it that goes on and it's next. (S., high school history teacher, 1984.)

> There's a group of about ten of us that meet in there. Some from the English Department, one or two from the foreign language department, a couple from the science department, myself, and people drift in and out and we talk about anything from the front page of the paper to the staff meeting that didn't go over as well as it should have, to what are you teaching today, to sharing notes about different students -- so it's very varied. Or what book have you read lately? Do you want to borrow this record and tape it? Or I tried this new type of tape and it didn't work as well as the Maxell -- cover so many topics in such a short period of time...I see a lot of different people during the day. I know a lot of people in the high school. (K., high school vocational education and science teacher, 1984.)

> I don't have enough of the very close -- I don't have a real close relationship on a sustaining basis. Do you know what I mean? (F., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

<u>Importance of the principal's influence on school climate.</u>

A topic raised by most of the teachers, not introduced by the interviewer, was the importance of the principal or

department head in creating a congenial and supportive work environment. We cannot underestimate the pivotal character of the authority position in any investigation of school work environments for teachers. Nine of the teachers talked about the importance of their principal or department head in nurturing a friendly school climate in which to work.

> Sam (the principal) was interested in gifted and talented. When I'd start talking about it (planning activities for gifted and talented children) he would encourage me to do it. He was really delighted to hear that I was doing it and to see that I was doing it so it was very reinforcing because it can be a real hassle when you have to make up all this stuff. (D., first grade teacher, 1984.)

> I've worked out a relationship with my principal that -- lots of conversations -- I think she has trust in me -- my judgment -- and so I feel I've been able to grow, move in a direction I want to grow in. (B., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

> I think the majority of us (at this school) feel -- maybe I shouldn't say that -- it's how I feel and I know a few others -- but it's just a very special experience here and that she (the principal) makes you really feel a very important member of the staff. She's the kind of person you'd do anything for. Know what I'm saying? When she asks me to do something I don't think twice about it. I know that it's something right and good for the students and there's the feeling of working together for the good of the school. (A., Learning Center coordinator in an elementary school, 1984.)

> I've got a very good department head who lets me teach my honors classes and asks me what else I'd like to teach and so I vary things from year to year. (S., high school teacher, 1984.)

> He (the principal) is a kindred spirit. (F., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

> R. (the principal) does not support having parents of kids in the room (volunteer to work) in that room. He wants volunteers but he doesn't...now he told PTO this. The hard part is, P. (the former principal) came to me and asked me to do that the first year. He said, "You've got some really great parents in here, L." M. couldn't use them all in the Learning Center and they

> didn't feel as though they were doing enough, working with kids, just in the library. So it sort of had P.'s blessing, which makes a big difference becaue sometimes you do hit a snag. You need at least to talk to somebody. The decision is ultimately mine. I put the parent in here and it's my job to get the parent out of here (if it doesn't work out), not the principal's, but -- you have to talk it over with someone and without his backing, well, he could say, "I told you not to do that in the first place and now sink or swim." So it makes for a little more uncomfortable feeling. (L., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

Teacher isolation. Isolation was a theme volunteered by eight of the ten teachers when the interviewer asked them to discuss social climate among teachers in their department or school. Three forms of isolation emerged: (1) social isolation, (2) professional isolation, (3) and combined social and professional isolation resulting from conflict. Social isolation was attributed by some teachers to lack of time for teachers to see one another. Teachers who arrived early in the morning had opportunities to socialize before students arrived.

> I'd say the chief get-together is about fifteen minutes in the morning. I can usually get here about seven-thirty. My first class is eight o'clock and I normally go in the teachers' room and we sit down. (K., high school teacher, 1984.)

> I rarely have the opportunity to talk with other teachers in the building about what I'm doing. There's some congregation in the staff room in the morning, very little in the afternoon...Everybody has a different schedule. Some squeak in at eight o'clock. (L., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

> Before school, after school. That's the only time because there's no time during the daytime. We break at lunch in two different shifts. By the time you get your children to the lunchroom, get coffe, then your twenty-three minutes are gone. There's no time during the day that you can get together. (F., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

This year it's very lonely. (F., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

A sense of professional isolation resulted from lack of opportunity for meaningful contact among teachers. Usually teachers see only students during the day. Other adults are seldom present to observe and discuss academic content and student responses or give teachers feedback.

> I think that's sad because to appreciate what your colleagues are doing or even what you're doing you have to see what they're doing and what they're thinking and their attitudes in areas such as this. (K., high school teacher, 1984.)

> I would love to have people come in and observe and sit around afterwards -- love to have the time to do it -- and watch other people teach. I don't think we have the time, though, to do that much. (K., high school teacher, 1984.)

> We all sit in our classrooms and we're all afraid to open our mouths to tell anybody else what we're doing for fear that they'll criticize. (D., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

> I don't really get much time, although I would like more of that. I would really like more chances to get feedback and to ask questions. (M., high school teacher, 1984.)

> We do talk about our classes but it's mostly about behavior. (B., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

In some cases open conflict had erupted and teachers were both socially and professionally isolated from factions of the school staff:

> I asked her (what she thought about my presentation at an inservice meeting) and that's when I got the negative feedback. Opened my big mouth. In the end, although it created anxiety, it was good. I saw it s partly my problem and partly that person's problem. (B., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

> It's negative talk and negative attitude and it takes a lot of energy not to get involved. (F., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

> It was difficult because it sounded like being a hotshot. I was criticized behind my back. (D., elementary school teacher, 1984.)
>
> I'm not comfortable in this role (on principal's faculty advisory committee) with my colleagues. It sets me aside. (L., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

All the teachers interviewed were considered by their principals to be exceptionally highly committed to professional growth and development. Their professonal growth seems to be unaffected by social climate, whether it engenders warm relationships or strong feelings of isolation. However, if we can judge from teachers' concerns, supportive principals and department heads influence the frequency and duration of teacher collaboration, constructive interaction, and opportunities for professional development.

Shared frames of reference. When teachers discussed collaborative projects on which they had worked with colleagues, they recounted learning common frames of reference and terms that facilitate discussions of ideas and topics related to education. Departmental barriers in the high school were broken by projects that cut across departments. Cooperative attitudes in elementary schools were sustained by the frames of reference that resulted from such projects. For example, a vocational education teacher and a science teacher developed an evening series of classes for gifted students.

> As teachers -- when you get in high school -- when you're working in departments, you set up little

> barriers around yourself for some reason or other. I don't understand why and I don't like it but -- I don't know if that's more comfortable to speak with people who speak your terminology or what but you go into the lunchroom and it seems like the science teachers are sitting there and the English teachers are sitting over there and the T. & I. (Trades & Industry) teachers are sitting over here. This year has given me real opportunity to break down those borders. Working both for T. & I. and science, I feel that it has also given science people an opportunity to say, "Hey, he works with us and we can go over and sit down." I'm beginning to see those barriers crumble. I'm very happy about it because the discussions we hve at noon can range from something very scientific to something as basic as "How come my car didn't start last night?" to "Did you attend the workshop on holograms at the University?" and "Gee, we've got a new laser in the science department and this is what we can do with it." The conversatons have really opened up this year.

Two teachers from one school worked on a district science curriculum committee. One of them had read much of Piaget's work and based part of his curriculum on inquiry methods. He told the interviewer that after working on a district science curriculum with the another teacher from the same school, "She was the only teacher I ever talked about Piaget with." (B., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

Shared frames of reference and the use of common vocabularies can help teachers reach mutual understandings when differences of opinion arise, even when open conflict results.

> Once we established our terms -- what is enrichment, who are the gifted and talented kids, not just your above-average academically quick achievers or the good kids who are always smiling -- once we established our ground rules and that we had all been doing things for them in our classes but not calling it gifted and talented -- then I found that some of the resentment (that had been simmering) for me was cut back. (D., elemntary school teacher, 1984.)

Collaborative projects and shared understandings lay groundwork for informal friendships to develop. All ten teachers interviewed spoke about their need for cameraderie at work -- the flip side of their sense of isolation. All experienced some enjoyable social contact with other teachers, although the quality and amount of socialization and support varried widely.

> It's so good for cameraderie -- working on a problem together and solving it and the best thing is if you're working on something with a goal in mind to solve it, you feel so good about it. And it gives you something else to talk about.. (D., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

Self-confidence of teachers. Of the teachers interviewed, those who experienced the greatest number of fulfilling social contacts at school also displayed the greatest self-confidence in their professional competence as teachers.

> I don't think I need any more confidence, to tell you the truth...I've done a good job since I've been here...I feel I have. (K, high school teacher, 1984.)

> I feel pretty confident. I know my material. I think I keep up with the material and I do my homework. I get prepared for classes. I like kids...I'm pretty confident. I think I'm where I belong. (S., high school teacher, 1984.)

One teacher who had only a few social contacts at school openly expressed feelings of loneliness and, when asked by the interviewer to describe her teaching style, characterized it as eclectic, a potpourri. She declined to respond directly to questions about her confidence as a teacher, volunteering little self-evaluative judgment,

although she commented that a recent Effective-Teaching Workshop had made her "feel good about my own work." She reflected on the teaching profession in more generic terms:

> It's interesting. One of the recurring themes -- when you really think about it, when you really, really think about the role of the teacher -- it's the most demeaning profession in the world. If you permit it to be. But even when you respect yourself as a professional and you conduct yourself in a professional way -- in most instances, it's a demeaning, grovelling situation. One of the points I've been trying to figure out...We (at this school) are so fortunate -- I mean we don't have to go in and give little excuses "why I want to leave early." We need to say, "I'm leaving." (The principal) never sends us home and we don't grovel with gratitude as some other places. I don't like to treat kids that way. I don't want to be treated that way. When else do you really have to fight to use the toilet -- what other profession? (F., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

Because this study includes only teachers perceived by their principals as actively growing professionally, there is no way to compare teachers identified as not actively growing professionally. In further studies informative relationships might be found by comparing the quality and extent of social networks among members of a heterogeneous sample of teachers and findings in the same sample on self-evaluation and professional self-confidence.

All teachers interviewed for this study believed that collaborative projects led to common understandings and the use of common frames of reference. These, in turn, led to meaningful social and professional relationships among teachers and higher levels of discussion about professional issues. Higher qualitative levels of interactive teacher talk and broader social networks in schools seemed to lead

to more confidence and positive self-image. A further important question would be, does a high-level, friendly social network among teachers lead to better educational approaches and/or more productive educational outcomes for their students? In this study a variety of educational approaches emerged from the interviews. Findings must, of course, be interpreted with great caution because the sample is small, homogeneous, and entirely drawn from one school district.

TEACHER BELIEFS. Interview questions of two types concerned educational philosophies of teachers. One type of question was designed to reveal teachers' educational ideals and goals and the other type was designed to elicit ways in which teachers applied their ideals and goals to curriculum planning, programs for specific children, and interactions with children. In most cases teachers talked about educational plans for specific children in terms consistent with their educational ideals and goals. The interviewer asked each teacher to describe a child about whom she or he did a large amount of thinking -- a child who, for positive or negative reasons, was of great concern to the teacher. Interestingly, teachers' responses fell into two main categories; a deficit-diagnostic model and a process-access model. (McLaughlin & Berman, 1975, refer to a similar contrast between a deficit model and a developmental model in teacher-training programs.)

Deficit-diagnostic model. The deficit-diagnostic model is well-illustrated by one teacher who made distinctions between gifted and slow children, expecting educational outcomes in terms of observable behaviors and skills -- a diagnostic, descriptive approach:

> It's a little frustrating -- that philosophy of taking them as far as they can go -- it's real easy with gifted children because you can take them as far as they can go and you feel real proud of yourself. When you have a child who's very very slow you have to accept the fact that they're very , very slow and that you're just going to do a much smaller bit -- that their progress may not look as impressive but for them it is and it's hard sometimes with a child who's taken three weeks to recognize the word "go" to know that that's as far as they can go at the minute and you have to be satisfied with that and that's the part I have a problem with. (D., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

The same teacher outlined her concerns about a specific child and described activities she initiates to help the child overcome his social and academic problems:

> He came in just before Thanksgiving and he doesn't have very much self-control but it helps to remind him that he's at school. I hold him and I face him towards me with my hands so that they're blinders and I say, "Remember me?" and I say, "Have I ever hit you?" "No." At first he wasn't sure, see. "Oh, teachers never hit kids..." You have to remind him that he's in school and that nothing awful is going to happen to him and we don't yell and we don't kick but we do expect you to try your best and then if you can't do it then you ask for help. But you have to look at the paper before you say, "I can't do it." (D., elementary school teacher.)

The philosophical model this teacher and others used for conceptualizing the child's educational needs is a deficit-diagnostic model because the child's skill levels, social and academic, are diagnosed or assessed and then plans for that child's educatonal program are made in order to raise skills to the next higher levels. The ultimate

aim is to help the child move to the highest skill levels that particular child is capable of attaining. The assumption is that skill levels are of an hierarchical nature and that children's developmental patterns follow regular sequences at varying speeds. Some children attain higher levels than others. This is a deficit model because the focus is on what the child lacks. It is diagnostic because it involves a describing a present state (skill level) and prescribing for correction of the deficit in sequential increments.

The developmental process-access model: uncovering and discovering knowledge. The second category of teachers' goals and ideals, following the developmental process-access model, featured a focus on children's access to learning. Within this category some teachers emphasized helping children uncover knowledge they already possess, but of which they are unaware. Other teachers focused on the importance of helping children learn to access knowledge from sources outside themselves. In contrast to the deficit-diagnostic model, this model is more akin to an aquisition-of-health or preventive-medicine model. Here there is an accent on help for acquiring knowledge rather than diagnosis of ignorance. The child's state of knowledge is conceived as half-full and filling rather than half-empty and in need of remediation. For example, one teacher puzzled over a first-grader's persistent confusion regarding serial order:

> It's a lot of work to get him to the root of his thoughts. I never felt comfortable that I knew what was wrong. (L., elementary school teacher, 1984.)

She focused on providing the child access to his own thoughts. The following account is by a teacher whose aim is to provide therapy as well as help a student learn to write. She, too, illustrates the access-by-uncovering model of learning:

> First I asked him what he was interested in and he talked about a few things like photography and sports and we talked about his writing something sports or photography. He said, "Maybe I'll write about a sports photographer," and then he wrote a beautiful paragraph describing a man hurtling through space and then his parachute opened and all of a sudden it switched to his taking a picture of him, going click, click -- capturing that moment forever. It was beautiful, it was breathtaking. He read it to the class and they all ohhed and ahhed -- how descriptive and vivid it was, and then he did nothing with it for a week. How you could do nothing with it!! And this is so typical of the way he does everything -- the way he conducts his life -- and he didn't know what to do with it -- it was just a nice sequence of events. We talked abut it -- how every story needs a conflict -- big, small, little -- it needs something to happen to make it into a story and that seemed to be like a thunderbolt for him and he thought for a while and I waited. I waited and I didn't suggest anything. I waited seconds in the classroom before he answered -- you know -- before suggesting. This is something I learned in one of my classes -- about waiting and counting to yourself.

This teacher's patience finally resulted in personal triumph for her student.

> He came up with --well, he said -- his mother dies and, in fact, that's his own history and that's what's unresolved in his own life. His mother was a schizophrenic who set herself on fire and died several years ago and he hasn't touched that at all. He hasn't worked that through and he's scared and depressed and rigid. He's worried about it. So that was pretty exciting. Then he just wrote and wrote and wrote -- fourteen pages. The story changed its focus entirely from the sportswriter -- sports photographer's exciting life to the sportsphotographer feeling like he was

> going crazy when his mother died. So it was really therapeutic. We talked. He showed the sports photographer showing signs of depression -- like he slept all he time and withdrew from is frinds and we were able to talkabout that, what the signs of depression are. This boy is also depressed. That was fascinating. That boy has occupied a lot of my thoughts and concern and excitement. I could see something happening. (M., private alternative high school teacher, 1984.)

An alternative approach to helping students access knowledge is to help students search for knowledge from sources outside the self. One teacher says he

> ...tries to teach them how to think on their own. More than anything else, I think it's important that they can take certain information, know where to find the information, and then apply it...Understanding...In other words, I don't teach a course where you're going to be able to fix a television set when you get out of there. I do teach that these are the basic components used in electronics. This is how they operate. This is the number of things you're going to have to look at. You should be able to look at a circuit and tell me basically what it's designed to do and if this component goes bad, this will be the end result. And they learn to use a lot of different types of equipment, improve the theories that have been on the books for years and years. (K., high school teacher, 1984.)

Applying his philosophy to a specific student, the same teacher says,

> This boy is very capable of doing the work but to motivate him into doing the work and make him believe in himself takes a lot of tricks and takes a lot of individual attention when we're doing labs...when he does well I always make sure there's a note attached to his paper. I've been known to call his mother up and say, "Boy, you ought to tell your son that I was very pleased with what he did today." I saved a couple papers from the first part of the year to show him how his work has improved from the scribbly three-colored ink on the first homework assignment to the very near perfect assignment now with the printing and ruler to draw the lines and I talk to him about hockey, ask him how he's doing. I always make sure I will ask him a question that I know he can answer if I've asked him one that he can't answer so that he feels good about himself and that the students will actually search him

> out now and then for an answer. In other words, he's just not on the outermost fringes. I have switched his lab groups around -- tried to get him with people who would motivate him more or where he could motivate somebody else or actually teach somebody else. (K., high school teacher, 1984.)

Another teacher's concern is to lead one particular student to gain access to new knowledge by seeing two sides of a question before he opts wholeheartedly for one side:

> I just want him to be a whole person. He is in a class where we do a lot in honors history with interpretations of history and one of my favorite devices is to say to kids, "How do you think about this or how do you analyse this?" and make them write the other side. (S., high school history teacher, 1984.)

In summary, the emergent categories of teachers' beliefs and applications are, first, the deficit-diagnostic model and, second, two variations of a developmental process-access model. In the first the attempt is made to diagnose and describe skill behaviors and to prescribe treatment. In the second the teacher focuses on process and attempts to facilitate development a student undergoes in accessing knowledge. In the process-access model, knowledge is assumed to be either inside or outside of the student and the student's task is to gain access to it. If knowledge resides internally, access involves uncovering it. If knowledge resides externally, access is gained through the student's interest and motivation and the removal of obstacles which might be preventing the student from accessing that knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS. In this small study, teachers who focused on helping students gain access to knowledge were the same

teachers who expressed the highest degree of confidence in their teaching competence and the highest degree of satisfaction with their jobs. They were also the same teachers who described belonging to the widest social networks and reported experiencing the least amount of isolation within the school. However, because of the small number of teachers interviewed, conclusions are to be interpreted as possible directions for further investigation and not as generalizations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH. Further investigation needs to be carried forth on such questions as: does emphasis or focus on student access to knowledge, personal involvement in broad social networks, and professional self-confidence consistently converge across a large sample of teachers? Extending the question further, do we find convergence of a developmental process-access approach and professional self-confidence in teachers oriented toward professional growth and development? Are principals' support and strong social networks results or causes of teachers' orientations toward professional growth and development? If principals' support and social networks influence teachers' professional growth, can principals' support and social networks be designed intentionally to foster rich professional orientations toward growth and development? If school climates are products of teachers' beliefs, then can teachers' beliefs be altered to afford them easier access to professional improvement? If

teachers' beliefs can be altered, then how is that best accomplished? Finally, what is the nature of relationships existing between teacher beliefs, improvement of teaching, and student learning?

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